

Canada-U.S. Relationship following the Illegal Blockades in Canada: High-Level Narrative

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Canada and the U.S. have taken unprecedented action to combat the pandemic, support our citizens, and stabilize our economies, both individually and together as partners. In doing so, we have built on the foundations of a close and longstanding relationship. Throughout the pandemic, we have relied on science and the advice of our public health officials to help us chart this course, and we will continue to do so, as we learn to live with COVID.

This has not been easy, and now some of our citizens are saying “enough.” Unfortunately, this has led to a very real demonstration of frustration and exhaustion, resulting in illegal blockades in Canada, including at the Canada-U.S. border.

The blockades harmed our economy and endangered public safety. This is why the Canadian federal government has invoked the Emergencies Act to supplement provincial and territorial capacity to address the blockades and occupations. To be very clear, the scope of these measures is time-limited, as well as reasonable and proportionate to the threats they are meant to address and will be carried out in accordance with Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Let’s also keep in mind that illegal blockades and other activities that involve extremist elements are something we’ve seen in the U.S. and in many other countries. In Canada, the blockades were emboldened and assisted by many millions of dollars in funding from thousands of Americans and by the vocal support from several prominent Americans. Canadian and American law enforcement and public safety authorities have co-operated closely to help keep both our countries safe throughout these events.

This is all the more reason why we must remain vigilant and strengthen our cross-border partnership. On this, I want to say two things.

First, the blockages at the Canada-U.S. border were short-lived; the situation has now returned to normal at all crossings; only a handful of the 119 land border crossings were affected; and, trade is already resuming at normal levels. It’s critical to point out that all of these situations were resolved in a manner that avoided conflict, injury and escalation.

In future, Canada will work to ensure that any attempts to block border crossings will be addressed rapidly and safely to prevent disruptions of our integrated supply chains and protect the security of our citizens. We will continue to work closely with our U.S. partners at both the federal and state levels to tackle similar threats on either side of the border.

Let’s not forget that we’ve seen border disruptions before, both big and small, for reasons ranging from security challenges to natural disasters or extreme weather. Whether cross-border or at home, no supply chain is immune to disruption and no country can produce everything it needs; the United States is no exception. Some in the U.S. have used these blockades to argue that the U.S. should rely more on itself and less on others, including Canada. This is misguided – the benefits of integration of our cross border supply chains far outweigh the risks. The lesson is that we are always stronger when we work together to end disruptions and ensure the safety of our borders and the free flow of goods and people.

We are living in an increasingly complicated world with unprecedented global challenges. Now more than ever we must strengthen our North American neighbourhood; for the United States it makes good economic sense and it also ensures the safety and security of our citizens. The U.S. sells close to \$240 billion in goods and services to Canada each year and millions of U.S. jobs depend on trade and investment with Canada. Our integrated supply chains have underpinned decades of mutual prosperity for communities on both sides of the border, even when global supply chains broke down during COVID. This is why it is so important that we work together to protect our partnership, not tear it down. It's important for allies to have reliable partners they can count on and the U.S. has no better supply chain partner than Canada, a next door neighbor that shares your values.

Second, it can be easy at a time like this to forget how seamlessly our two countries work together to advance our shared priorities in a wide diversity of areas, as laid out in the *Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership*. The Roadmap reminds us of what we stand to lose if we don't stand together. Let me point out a few examples:

- In the face of global disruption challenges, let's build on our continent's food security by strengthening our existing cooperation - to ensure the vital work of food production, processing, distribution and sales continue.
- We are extremely privileged to have energy independence but the integrated nature of our energy systems, where events on one side of the border affect both our countries, means it is more important than ever to ensure a secure, reliable, and sustainable supply of energy resources for North America and beyond.
- And of course there's the critical job of protecting the continent, under the watchful eyes of Canadian and American military, law enforcement, homeland security and intelligence personnel.

Economic integration, continental security, integrated supply chains, energy security, and agreements like the new USMCA all contribute to our distinct North American advantage.

The pandemic has served to underscore – and strengthen – the cooperation between our governments, our businesses and, ultimately, our deep and enduring people-to-people ties. Canadians and Americans have depended on each other for decades: from the beaches of northern France in World War Two to the hours and days following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Canadians and Americans have faced the great challenges of the world side by side and we continue to work together to bolster the rules-based international order. We defend and protect North America together. We are stewards of our shared environment. We stand on the world stage to respond to pressing global challenges together. And in times of crisis, such as right now with Ukraine, we stand up to face them together.

We all share a hope that we are nearing the end of this pandemic and that a new “normal” isn't far off. We've seen that the Canada-U.S. relationship can withstand and even grow in the face of challenges. Moving forward, we must safeguard this heightened awareness of our how we make each other stronger and look for ways to reinforce our shared North American neighbourhood.

I encourage you to continue to speak up about the benefits of the Canada-U.S. relationship.